

Millennial Marriage: How Much Does Economic Security Matter to Marriage Rates for Young Adults?

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Abstract: Young adults today are marrying at lower rates than previous generations, and self-reports suggest that a lack of economic security plays a role in the decline. However, it is unclear which aspects of economic security truly matter with regard to young adult marriage rates: At the aggregate (county) level, is it a matter of employment, wages, poverty, or housing? Or, do all these factors matter? Moreover, how does the measurement of each concept matter to understanding how an economic prerequisite to marriage may operate among young adults? Finally, are the economic characteristics of men more relevant to marriage rates than those of women, as research about previous generations suggests? Using five-year estimates (2012-2016) from the American Community Survey at the county level, this study finds that labor force characteristics, wages, poverty, and housing (e.g., housing costs and living arrangements) are all associated with marriage rates among young adults, but there are factors within each economic category that tend to be more closely associated with marriage rates than others. Moreover, there was little evidence that men's economic characteristics are more often significantly associated than those of women, as estimates suggest that the economic characteristics of both men and women matter to marriage among young adults today.

¹ **Disclaimer:** This paper is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion of work in progress. The views expressed on statistical or methodological issues are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Introduction

Young adults today, sometimes referred to as “millennials,”² are marrying at lower rates than previous generations at similar life stages (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). In 2013, only 26 percent of young adults aged 18-32 were married, a percentage significantly lower than the 36 percent of same-age adults in 1997 (i.e., “Generation X”) and 48 percent in 1980 (i.e., “Baby Boomers”; see Pew Research Center 2014). Even among young adults today, there has been a decline in “new marriage” rates (i.e., married within the past 12 months) over a short period of time. Using American Community Survey data, Pew Research Center concluded that young adults aged 18 to 24 had a new marriage rate of 29.6 (per 1,000 marriage eligible adults)³ in 2012 compared to 36.4 in 2008, while young adults ages 25-34 had a new marriage rate of 75.0 in 2012 compared to 84.6 in 2008 (Fry 2014). The downward trend is accompanied by rises in cohabitation rates and non-marital births among young adults, both of which are significantly higher than the previous generation (Wang and Taylor 2011).

What explains the lower marriage rates among young adults? Economic insecurity and a lack of financial resources seem to be a common answer given by the young people themselves (Pew Research Center 2010, 2014). Although most people claim to marry for love and not economic reasons (Coontz 2005), research nonetheless shows that economic security is considered a “prerequisite” for marriage in modern times (Cherlin 2005; Pew Research 2014;

² The term “millennial” is used at times throughout the paper, but it is important to note that “millennial” has been used loosely and inconsistently across studies. Some suggest that this generation started in the late 1970s while others suggest the early 1980s (see Berridge 2014; MetLife 2009; Wells 2015). Likewise, the end of this generation ranges from the mid/late 1990s to early 2000s (see Fry 2016; Horowitz 2012). Although research on millennials and their financial/family contexts are helpful in guiding the present study, the lack of clear cut-off years makes it problematic to measure. Instead, I focus on simply measuring young adults, a common term for adults aged 18 to 34 (see Payne 2016; Vespa 2017).

³ Pew Research Center, the group responsible for the study, defines the marriage eligible population as those who are newly married, divorced, widowed, or never married at the time of the interview. The U.S. Census Bureau, who collects the American Community Survey data, does not use the term “marriage eligible” nor does it typically calculate marriage rates in the same way in its published products (see Elliott and Simmons 2011).

Smock, Manning, and Porter 2005), particularly among those with fewer economic resources, including African American and working-class individuals (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Raley and Bratter 2004; Raley and Sweeney 2009). Low earnings, poverty, debt, housing costs, and unemployment are all negatively associated with entry into marriage and marital living arrangements (Addo 2014; Bozick and Estacion 2014; Gibson-Davis 2009; Hughes 2003; Schneider and Hastings 2015; Vespa, Burd, and Kreider 2017). There are multiple reasons for this. First, the process of marrying is itself expensive, as engagement rings and increasingly lavish weddings introduce barriers to those lacking economic resources (Gibson-Davis, Edin, and McLanahan 2005; Smock et al. 2005). Second, cultural expectations surrounding marriage also entail other important, but expensive, life events, such as purchasing a home and raising children (Gibson-Davis 2007). And third, financial strains and disagreements are strong predictors of both relationship quality (Hardie and Lucas 2010) and divorce (Dew, Brit, and Huston 2012), so treating economic security as a “prerequisite” to marriage may be seen as a preemptive attempt to prevent future marital problems. Although few studies have looked at the current generation of young adults, and socioeconomic factors often are limited to one or two measures per study, past research still suggests that economic security plays a role in marital decisions.

If economic resources appear to be important for entry into marriage, then it is understandable why many young adults today choose not to marry; they are facing unprecedented economic burdens despite being on average more educated than previous generations (Berridge 2014; Vespa 2017). In addition to historically high levels of student loan debt (Project on Student Debt 2008, 2011), many millennials entered the job market during and after the Great Recession (2007-2009), a time period of great economic strain for young

working-age adults. Based on five-year American Community Survey estimates from 2009-2013, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among those under 25 (see Carter 2014), led to approximately 13.5 million young adults living in poverty during this time period compared to just 8.4 million young adults in 1980 (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). In 2016, 41 percent of young men aged 25 to 34 had an annual income below \$30,000 compared to just 25 percent in 1975 (based on 2015 dollars; see Vespa 2017). Indeed, millennials are the first generation in the modern era to have more debt, poverty, and unemployment, as well as lower personal wealth and income, than the two preceding generations at similar life stages (see Pew Research Center 2014; Project on Student Debt 2008, 2011; Vespa 2017). The economic insecurity among young adults is also reflected in living arrangements and housing markets, as fewer young adults are buying houses than previous generations and an unprecedented proportion are still living with parents (Fry 2015, 2017; Vespa 2017; Olick 2016). In sum, the economic security necessary for young adults to marry appears elusive given the various constraints pertaining to employment, income, poverty, and housing.

Given the challenging economic circumstances facing young adults today and their reported low marriage rates, the relationship between economic conditions and young adult marriage rates needs to be understood thoroughly in order to assess the future of marriage in the United States. However, literature on the subject of economic security and marriage are limited in their focus on previous generations (see Manning and Smock 1995; Sassler and Goldscheider 2004; Sassler and Schoen 1999; Smock and Manning 1997), and most studies only take into account one (or two) different forms of economic insecurity (see Clarkberg 1999; Oppenheimer 2003; Xie et al. 2003). What aspects of economic security truly matter to young adults today? Is it a matter of employment, wages, poverty, or housing? Or, do all these factors matter?

Moreover, how does the measurement of each concept matter to understanding how an economic prerequisite to marriage may operate among young adults? Finally, are the economic characteristics of men more relevant to marriage rates than those of women, as research about previous generations suggests (Brown 2000; Smock et al. 2005; Sweeney 2002)? In general, a more comprehensive study is needed to examine how much economic security matters to young adult marriage today and to assess the future of marriage in the United States if economic barriers persist.

Using five-year estimates of the American Community Survey (2012-2016) among young adults aged 18-34, the present study views economic insecurity as a multidimensional concept with various subcomponents and differentiates itself from previous studies in a number of ways. First, it explores the unique ways in which labor force participation, wages, poverty, and housing conditions all predict marriage rates among young adults today. Second, it further differentiates how the measurement of each concept (e.g., labor force participation could be measured as unemployment, full-time work, or hours worked) matters to how the economic prerequisite to marriage operates among young adults. Third, it explores the interaction between different types of economic insecurity (e.g., wages and housing costs). And finally, it divides both socioeconomic indicators and marriage rates by sex in order to test the commonly held argument that men's economic conditions matter more to marriage than those of women (Brown 2000; Smock et al. 2005; Sweeney 2002). In this way, this study deconstructs what is truly meant by "economic security" and elucidates its relationship with the marriage rates of young adults today.

The Multidimensionality of Socioeconomic Effects on Marriage

Economic security, with regard to understanding the likelihood of marriage, is best understood as a multidimensional concept, composed of various subcomponents contributing to what constitutes economic security. As a cohabiting respondent in Smock and colleagues' (2005) qualitative study succinctly notes, "For us to get married we'd have to have a lot. Like we'd have to both have *good jobs, money, and a place to stay*" (Smock et al. 2005: 690, emphasis mine). In other words, it's not just one economic factor, but multiple factors that may hinder marriage. Reducing the measurement of economic security to one or two measures fails to encompass this variation and limits the ability to theorize the extent to which economic security matters to marriage. Moreover, the ways in which an economic indicator, like employment, matters may depend on the way it is measured (e.g., unemployed, full-time employment, and hours worked) and the population universe to which it pertains (e.g., men vs. women). This section reviews four different types of socioeconomic areas of relevance: labor force participation, wages, poverty, and housing (e.g., housing costs and living arrangements).⁴ This paper also discusses the nuances of each area based on measurement of these concepts and how results differ by sex.

Labor Force Participation

Labor force participation is an important factor for marriage, as it ensures financial security through regularly scheduled wage payments and access to other forms of economic security, like health insurance and retirement benefits. The lack of employment introduces financial hardship and uncertainty, making it a potential barrier to marriage. Because of this, there are numerous quantitative studies highlighting the positive role of employment on the transition to marriage among cohabiters and singles, including Brown (2000), Manning and Smock (1995), Sessler and

⁴ Debt certainly is another important factor worthy of exploration, particularly among millennials (see Project on Student Debt 2008, 2011). However, due to limitations in debt measures in the American Community Survey, this is not explored in the present study.

Goldscheider (2004), and Sweeney (2002). Specifically, numerous studies have found that full-time employment is positively associated with marriage, particularly among men (see Koball 1998; Oppenheimer 2003, Oppenheimer, Kalmijn and Lim 1997; Sassler and Schoen 1999). Full-time employment, as opposed to only part-time employment, may represent the “good jobs” necessary to bolster marriage rates. Another way to examine employment effects is to consider hours worked per week. More time at work allows young adults to maximize earning potential and upward mobility within individual career ladders. Moreover, it reflects commitment and discipline, traits that may be attractive to potential partners (Sherman 2017). Because of this, the present study measures unemployment, full-time employment, and hours worked as indicators of the relationship between labor force participation and the marriage rates among young adults, with unemployment being negatively related while full-time employment and hours worked are positively related to marriage rates.

Given how gender specialization in society and within marriages still reinforces attitudes of men as “breadwinners” (Sherman 2017; Smock et al. 2005), it is possible that the employment of men matters more to marriage rates than the employment of women. Some studies support this argument. For example, Sweeney (2002), using National Longitudinal Study of Youth data, found that the employment of men, but not women, predicted the transition to marriage among singles. Likewise, Brown’s (2000) study on cohabiting couples found that the male partner’s employment predicted marriage but not the female partner’s employment. However, there are limitations to these studies. Specifically, they focus on previous generations of young adults, but not today’s generation. Many millennials are likely to accept feminism and gender egalitarianism (see Fitzpatrick et al. 2011), making it more likely that traditional divisions of labor are challenged. Moreover, given the economic struggles of young adult men post-recession (see

Mattingly, Smith, and Bean 2011), and the rise in women entering the labor force compared to 40 years ago (see Vespa 2017), it is possible that the socioeconomic characteristics of both men and women matter, with women potentially playing a more important role than ever in establishing the economic security necessary for marriage. Because of this, I separate labor force characteristics by sex and test whether both men and women's characteristics are associated with marriage rates for young adults age 18 to 34.

Wages

Wages, the money obtained through employment, also play a very important role in understanding transitions into marriage.⁵ Having enough money, being able to pay for a wedding, and avoiding the stress associated with a lack of money are all common factors affecting whether couples that live together decide to get married (Smock et al. 2005). Along with employment, income indicators, like wages or earnings, are one of the most common ways researchers measure socioeconomic associations with marriage (see Brown 2000; Clarkberg 1999; Smock and Manning 1997; Wu and Pollard 2000). Not surprisingly, studies find that income-related indicators are positively associated with the transition to marriage, both among cohabiters and singles (see Gibson-Davis 2009; Lichter et al. 1992; Oppenheimer 2003; Sweeney 2002). Wages for full-time employees, though not always measured, may also be important, as they have the potential to produce higher relative income and greater economic security for marriage (see Clarkberg 1999).

⁵ In general, there are actually a variety of ways one can measure income, either in terms of salary wages, earnings (which include those of the self-employed), and total income (which includes supplemental sources of income like dividend interest and social security). However, these differences are less relevant among young adults given how only two to four percent of young adults ages 18 to 34 are self-employed (Hipple and Hammond 2016), and few would have investment or retirement income. Supplemental analyses show that the type of income indicator (wage, earnings, or total income) does not matter, as the results are the same substantively.

Similar to discussions of sex differences in the effects of employment, researchers have debated whether men's income matter more than women's. The results are somewhat mixed. Brown (2000), using data form the National Survey of Families and Households, found that male partner's earnings predicted the transition to marriage among cohabiters, but not female partner's earnings. Similarly, Xie and colleagues (2003), using 1980-1992 High School and Beyond data, found that the earnings of men mattered more to marriage than those of women. However, some studies have found positive effects of wages/earnings among both men and women (see Clarkberg 1999; Lichter et al. 1992; Sweeney et al. 2002). Similar to studies on employment, these studies do not focus on the most recent young adult generation, so the specific financial hardship of young adults today may make wages of both men *and* women salient to marriage. Because of this, I measure the wages of both men and women to examine whether the relationship between wages and marriage differs by sex.

Poverty

If employment and wages operate as important gateways to marriage, then it makes sense that poverty might operate as an important barrier. According to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, one must fulfill physiological needs, like food, water and shelter, before fulfilling high-order needs like safety and love/belonging. In this sense, being in poverty may obstruct the ability to focus on marital decisions given how one is struggling to survive. Moreover, some people are in such severe poverty that their income would need to double or triple simply in order to exceed the poverty threshold. This severe form of poverty is measured by the U.S. Census Bureau as income-poverty thresholds ratios that are less than 50 percent (e.g., \$10,000 income/\$20,000 poverty threshold; see Semega, Fontenot, and Kollar 2017). Indeed, severe poverty is the

antithesis of economic security, so it should be negatively associated with marriage rates among young adults.

Although not as common as employment and wages, some studies have examined the role of poverty in the likelihood of marriage. For example, Gibson-Davis (2009) found that cohabiting couples who became poor were associated with 37 percent lower odds of getting married. Focusing specifically on women, Lichter, Graefe, and Brown (2003) found that poor women with children were less likely to subsequently marry than those who were more economically stable. Likewise, Edin and Kefalas (2005) found that many poor women chose children over marriage, particularly because they did not consider the men they knew to be “marriageable.” In this sense, there may be gender differences regarding the relationship between poverty and marriage rates if men in poverty are particularly viewed in a negative light. However, there is a lack of research in the context of young adults today, a group more likely to be in poverty than previous generations of young adults (Pew Research Center 2014), so the present study divides poverty measures by sex to examine whether there indeed are any gender differences in the negative relationship between poverty and marriage rates.

Housing

Housing markets and the costs of housing function as important structural conditions that may affect the living arrangements and marital choices of young adults (Hughes 2003). Living in an area with high housing costs makes it difficult to “pay the bills,” an important factor often discussed in studies examining economic security and marriage (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Smock et al. 2005). Vespa (2017), using 2012 American Community Survey data on young adults, found that living with a spouse was more prevalent in metropolitan areas where housing is low-cost, abundant, and dominated by single-family houses. In contrast, expensive housing was linked with

living with a roommate, parent, cohabiting partner, or in a subfamily. Many young adults with college degrees are moving to areas with high housing costs because of the potential economic opportunities (The American Institute for Economic Research 2016), but this also increases the risk that “paying the bills” will become more difficult and thus reduce the likelihood of marriage. In this way, I expect high housing costs to be associated with lower marriage rates among young adults.

However, housing costs may also be understood as a moderating context affecting the efficacy of other economic factors, like wages, on marriage. Hughes (2003) finds that people are more likely to be married when potential earnings are high and housing costs are low. Stated another way, housing costs may weaken or buffer the positive effect of earnings because the rewards from those earnings do not go as far in areas with a high cost of living. High housing costs may offset the otherwise beneficial role of higher wages in providing economic security prior to marriage. Hence, the present study tests whether housing costs operates as a moderating effect, weakening the positive relationship between wages and marriage rates among young adults.

Another important housing condition relevant to marriage is homeownership. Historically, being able to establish an independent household was an important prerequisite to marriage (Hughes 2003: 1400), and homeownership certainly reflects one’s ability to maintain an independent household. It signifies financial stability in that the couple was able to afford a down payment and get approved for a mortgage (Gibson-Davis 2007). In this way, it can serve as a class status symbol, much like the ability to marry functions as an important class symbol (Cherlin 2004). In their qualitative study on cohabiting couples, Smock and colleagues (2005) found that approximately 22 percent of those mentioning at least one economic factor say that owning their own home is an important prerequisite for marriage. Lloyd and South (1996) also found that home

ownership positively predicted young men's transition to first marriage. Given that fewer millennials own homes compared to previous generations (Olick 2016; Vespa 2017), potentially as a result of a variety of economic burdens they face (see Fry 2014), the lack of homeownership among young adults may correlate with the low marriage rates of young adults today. In this way, the present study expects homeownership to be positively related to marriage rates for young adults age 18 to 34.

Instead of owning homes, a sizeable proportion of young adults live in their parents' home (Vespa 2017). In fact, for the first time in the modern era, living with parents is the most common living arrangement among young adults (Fry 2015, 2016; Vespa 2017). Research suggests young people are less likely to live with parents in more favorable labor markets (Buck and Scott 1993; Chew 1990; Whittington and Peters 1996), and because of the various economic burdens facing young adults today (see Fry 2014), it makes sense to save money by living with parents. Although it was common up until the mid-20th century to live with parents prior to marriage, current cultural notions view it as important to establish an independent residence prior to marriage now (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993). Qualitative studies on cohabiting couples suggest that those living with parents desire to become economically self-sufficient and move out prior to getting married (Smock et al. 2005). Because of this, the present study expects living with parents to be negatively related to marriage rates among young adults.

Hypotheses

In general, the present study hypothesizes that employment, wages, poverty, and housing conditions are all related to young adult marriage rates. Specifically, percent of young adults employed, median number of hours worked, median annual wages, and homeownership should be associated with higher marriage rates on the county level, while the percent of young adults

unemployed, higher levels of poverty, higher housing costs, and higher proportions of young adults living in their parents' homes should be associated with lower marriage rates. Based on prior research, I also examine whether the employment, wages, and poverty of men are more often significantly associated with marriage rates than the same characteristics for women. In seeking to explain the complex way in which economic characteristics of young adults and the areas in which they live are related to their marriage rates, this study offers a robust and comprehensive look at the economic prerequisites facing young adult marriage today.

Data and Methods

The current study uses five-year estimates (2012-2016) from the American Community Survey⁶ to test the association between socioeconomic characteristics and the marriage rates of young adults. The American Community Survey is a nationally representative annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau to examine national population estimates and social characteristics. I use the internal data file for the five-year ACS because it provides a larger sample than the public microdata files. The county level represents the unit of analysis for my study because it produces the most stable estimates at the smallest level of analysis reasonable to examine marriage rates.⁷ I restrict the sample to young adults aged 18-34 because this is consistent with demographic definitions of “young adults” (see Fry 2014; Payne 2016; Vespa 2017). Because of this, all variables, both independent and dependent, are specific to young adults (e.g., percent unemployed = percent unemployed for 18-34 year-olds). Moreover, all estimates created on the county level were weighted to produce nationally representative estimates. In order to get stable county estimates, the study sample was restricted to counties

⁶For information on when to use 1-year or 5-year ACS estimates, please visit: <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/estimates.html>

⁷ However, this level of geography does not represent marriage markets and economic markets well, so that is a limitation of the study.

with at least one hundred (weighted) men aged 18-34 and at least one hundred (weighted) women aged 18-34, leaving a total of 3,091 eligible counties.

Dependent Variable

For my dependent variable, I calculate age-specific marriage rates (new marriages in the last year per 1,000 age-specific population) for men and women separately for each of the counties in my study sample. Similar to how Bowling Green University categorizes young adults (Payne 2016), the age-specific groups are broken down into three groups: 18-24 year-olds, 25-29 year-olds, 30-34 year olds.⁸ The age-specific marriage rate is composed of new marriages in the last year for that age group divided by that age-specific population,⁹ which is done separately for both men and women. Afterward, those three age-specific marriage rates are averaged together to get the total marriage rate (i.e., TMR), resulting in a TMR for men and a TMR for women to use as dependent variables in the analyses.

Variables of Interest

The present study breaks down “economic” factors into four sections: labor force participation, wages, poverty, and housing. For labor force participation characteristics, I measure percent unemployed (men and women separately), percent working full-time (men and women separately), and median hours worked per week. For the section on wages, I measure the median annual wages (in \$1,000s for the regression estimates) for the following groups: all workers,

⁸ Since this study examines economic factors and marriage, two contexts salient in middle to late young adulthood (Vespa 2017), one may argue that young adults (i.e., 18-24) should be excluded from the analyses. However, robustness checks found that excluding young adults did not change the substantive results.

⁹ Alternatively the denominator sometimes is calculated per unmarried population of interest instead of the total population of interest in order to capture the marriage eligible population (see Fry 2014), but this approach faces limitations, including transitions in and out of marriage in the given year, challenging whether this group truly was eligible for marriage in the last year.

those working full-time,¹⁰ all male workers, and all female workers. In the poverty section, I measure percent living in poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of poverty,¹¹ and percent living in "severe" poverty as measured by income-poverty thresholds ratios that are less than 50% (e.g., \$10,000 income/\$20,000 poverty threshold; see Semega, Fontenot, and Kollar 2017). These poverty measures are shown separately for men and women as well. Finally, the housing section consists of median monthly housing costs for the county, percent who own a home, percent who live in their parents' home. I also create an interaction term by multiplying median housing costs and median wages to test whether housing costs moderate the relationship between wages and marriage rates.

Control Variables

In order to account for potentially spurious results, the analyses contain control variables. Educational attainment has been positively associated with both economic activity and marriage rates (Fry 2014; Kuo and Raley 2016; McClendon, Kuo, and Raley 2014), so I control for percent with a bachelor's degree. Being a full-time student may also hinder one's ability to both have financial stability and to marry, so I control for percent full-time students (measured as students who are not in the labor force). Much has been written about racial and ethnic variation with regard to economic factors and marriage rates (Raley and Sweeney 2009; Wilson 2003), so I control for percent black, percent Hispanic, and percent foreign born.¹² There also are regional differences in economic characteristics (U.S. Census Bureau 2016), as well as marriage events

¹⁰ I define "full-time" as working 40 hours or more per week, while production ACS tables define it as working 35 hours or more per week (see https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2016_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf)

¹¹ Visit: <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>

¹² Definitions of "foreign born" can be difficult depending on what one considers "foreign." I define it as anyone born outside of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, including Puerto Rico and other American territories, and being born abroad of American parents, while ACS production tables do not consider those two contexts "foreign born" (<https://factfinder.census.gov/>)

(Elliott and Simmons 2011), so I control for region using four dummy variables (Northeast, Midwest, and West; South = reference group). Finally, I control for percent living in an urban area and counties with a small young adult population (i.e., less than 1,000 young adults). Some of the control variables correlate with one another, but none of the control variables in the analyses produced variance inflation factors of three or higher, indicating low risk of multicollinearity (see Belsley, Kuh, and Welsch 1980).

Analytical Approach

In terms of the study's analytical approach, I use ordinary least squares regression to regress the marriage rates onto the variables of interest. Each regression table is divided into four topical sections and they are presented in the following order: labor force participation, wages, poverty, and housing. Within a given topical section, each variable of interest has its own regression model (with control variables), but is modeled separately from other related variables of interest. I do this in order to avoid issues of multicollinearity, as many of the variables are slightly modified versions of similar core variables. Moreover, all estimates are run separately for men's marriage rates and women's marriage rates. All analyses are run in SAS 9.4.

Results

To begin, Table 1 displays demographic statistics of young adults (18-34) at the national level, with some characteristics at the county level. These estimates are weighted.¹³ As shown, 85.4 percent of young adults live in urban areas, and only 5.5 percent live in a county with less than 1,000 young adults, suggesting that many have access to similarly aged peers. The unemployment rate is 8.3 percent for men and 7.1 percent for women. Approximately 56 percent

¹³ Standard errors are produced by using replicate weights. For more information on replicate weights and variance estimation using the American Community Survey, please visit: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/design-and-methodology.html>

of young adult men work full-time, compared to approximately 40 percent of young adult women. The median annual wages for all working adults is \$20,327 per year, while full-time workers make approximately \$30,580 per year. Male workers make a median salary of \$22,063 while female workers only make \$17,291 per year. The poverty rates for young adults are 15.9 percent for young adult men and 21.8 percent for young adult women. Furthermore, 7.8 percent of young adult men and 11.5 percent of young adult women live in severe poverty. Looking at housing characteristics, only 9.8 percent of young adults own a home while 31.7 percent live in their parents' home.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Table 2 focuses on the marriage rates of young adults aged 18 to 34 at the county level among counties with at least 100 weighted young adult men and 100 weighted young adult women. For men's marriage rates, the average is 39.0 new marriages per 1,000 young adult men, with the bottom quartile of the distribution reporting a marriage rate value of 26.8 or below and the top quartile of the distribution reporting a marriage rate value of 47.9 or higher. The average marriage rate for women is 43.9 new marriages per 1,000 young adult women, which is significantly higher than the average marriage rate for men. Counties that report a marriage rate of 30.7 or lower for women are in the bottom quartile of the distribution, while counties that report a marriage rate of 53.9 or higher are in the top quartile of the distribution. At the bottom of Table 2, I separate counties that fell into either the top or bottom quartile and compared their socioeconomic characteristics by taking the weighted average of each socioeconomic estimate within each quartile group. Counties with low marriage rates (i.e., bottom quartile) tend to differ in their socioeconomic characteristics from counties with high marriage rates (i.e. top quartile). For example, counties with higher marriage rates have a significantly lower unemployment

percentage and a higher percentage of men/women working full-time on average compared to counties with lower marriage rates. The median wages for all workers also tends to be higher on average for those in top quartile compared to the bottom quartile of the same distribution. For men's marriage rates, the average median salary for all workers in high marriage counties was \$18,617 compared to 16,658 in low marriage counties. A similar pattern exists for women's marriage rates, where the average median salary for all workers in high marriage counties was \$18,619 compared to 16,585 in low marriage counties. Moreover, the percentage of young adults in poverty or severe poverty is lower in counties with high marriage rates. Finally, counties reporting marriage rates in the top quartile of the distribution report on average a higher percentage of homeowners and lower percentage of young adults living in their parents' home compared to those in the bottom quartile of the same marriage distribution.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Table 3 examines the relationship between labor force characteristics and marriage rates for young adults using ordinary least squares regression with control variables. For all regression tables (Tables 3 to 6), unstandardized *b* regression coefficients are shown, which represent the average change in the dependent variable corresponding with a unit increase in the independent variable (controlling for all other variables in the model). In the regression models for labor force participation, the relationship between unemployment and marriage rates depended on whether the outcome variable pertained to men's or women's marriage rates. Although the indicators for percent unemployed were not significant for men's marriage rates, both the percentage of men and the percentage of women unemployed were negatively associated with women's marriage rates. Similarly, median hours worked produced inconsistent findings, with the indicator marginally significant for men's marriage rates but not the marriage rates for women. In contrast,

the percentage of young adults working full-time showed a strong and robust positive relationship with marriage rates, regardless of gender. Collectively, full-time employment produced a robust, positive relationship with marriage rates, while unemployment and median hours worked were less consistent indicators.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Table 4 tests the association between various wage estimates and young adult marriage rates. Median wages for all types of workers, regardless of whether they were part-time or full-time, were positively related to the marriage rates of both men and women. Median wages for full-time workers also were positive and significant for men's marriage rates but not for women's marriage rates. When dividing median wages into two groups, one for male workers and one for female workers, the indicator for male workers was positive and significant for all models, while the indicator for female workers was only significant for women's marriage rates. In sum, wages matter, and this is particularly true for workers as collective group (no part-time/full-time distinction) and male workers.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Table 5 explores the relationship between poverty and marriage rates. As a general category of economic security, poverty is not a reliable predictor of marriage rates, as only two out of eight models were significant in Table 5. All indicators for men's marriage rates were not significant. However, the poverty indicators of women were particularly important when examining women's marriages rates. Specifically, the percentage of women in poverty and severe poverty were negatively associated with women's marriage rates, while the poverty indicators of men did not produce significant associations. Thus, Table 5 indicates that the

poverty conditions of women play an important role when examining the likelihood of women entering into marriage.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

Table 6 examines housing characteristics and their association with marriage rates. In terms of cost of living factors, median housing costs were significant and negatively associated with marriage rates for men and women. However, median housing costs, for women's marriage rates at least, functioned as a significant moderating factor on the effect of wages on marriage. To illustrate this finding, Figure 1 displays the predicted probabilities from Table 6. In contexts where housing costs are low (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), the positive relationship between wages and women's marriage rates is strongly pronounced, producing a steep positive slope. However, this positive relationship becomes less steep in contexts of high housing costs (high = one standard deviation above the mean), suggesting that housing costs are best understood as a buffering factor for the otherwise positive relationship between wages and women's marriage rates.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

In terms of living arrangements in Table 6, home ownership and living in the parents' home were reliable predictors of marriage rates, as expected based on past research (Lloyd and South 1996; Smock et al. 2005). The percentage of young adults who owned a home was positively associated with both men and women's marriage rates. For example, for every percentage point increase in young adults owning a home, men's marriage rates increased 0.7 units and women's marriage rates increased 0.4 units. The opposite pattern is found for those living in their parents' home. The percentage of young adults living with a parent was negatively associated with men and women's marriage rates, suggesting living at home functions as a

barrier to the marriage rates for young adults. In sum, housing costs and living with a parent are negatively associated, while owning a home shows a positive relationship with marriage among young adults.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

Discussion and Conclusion

When it comes to the marriage rates of young adults, economic security matters in a number of ways, as labor force participation, wages, poverty, and housing all play a role. However, certain variables within each economic category showed more reliable significant associations than other variables. For example, with respect to labor force participation, full-time work had a robust positive association with marriage rates while unemployment and median hours worked produced less consistent results. With regard to wages, the median wages for all workers as a whole (no part-time/full-time distinction) and male workers specifically produced significant and positive associations with marriage rates. For the poverty measures, the poverty characteristics of women (i.e., percent in poverty, percent in severe poverty) showed a significant negative relationship with women's marriage rates, while the poverty characteristics of men were not significantly associated with either men's or women's marriage rates. Finally, housing costs were negatively associated with marriage rates, but for women's marriage rates, they buffered the otherwise positive relationship between wages and marriage. In terms of living arrangements, owning a home was positively associated with marriage rates while living in the parents' home was negatively associated. In sum, when discussing the economic prerequisite for young adults to enter into marriage, this study finds that full-time work, median wages, women's poverty (specifically for women's marriage rates), housing costs, owning a home, and living in their parents' home are all significantly related to young adult marriage in the United States.

Much has been discussed in past studies regarding the importance of male economic characteristics for marriage (Brown 2000; Sherman 2017; Smock et al. 2005; Xie et al. 2003), but the present study found little evidence to suggest that men's socioeconomic characteristics produced significant associations more often than those of women. Of the ten scenarios where male socioeconomic variables were tested, five models produced significant results. Of the ten scenarios involving female socioeconomic variables, six models produced significant results. What might explain this departure from past findings? One possible reason is the lack of diverse socioeconomic indicators, as many studies only focus on one or two forms of economic security (see Clarkberg 1999; Oppenheimer 2003; Xie et al. 2003). Another possible reason is that past studies did not specifically focus on today's young adults, who are facing particularly dire and unprecedented economic challenges unlike other recent generations (Pew Research Center 2014; Project on Student Debt 2008, 2011; Vespa 2017). Mattingly, Smith, and Bean (2011) note that the Great Recession not only hurt young adults economically, but men in particular faced greater employment challenges, so economic stability among both young adult men *and* women may be necessary for marriage. Moreover, some of the past studies focusing on the importance of economic security prior to marriage were qualitative and focused on unique low-income populations (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Smock et al. 2005; Sherman 2017), who have more traditional gender attitudes (Marks, Lam, and McHale 2009; Moore and Vanneman 2003). Finally, this study examines economic contexts and marriage at the aggregate county level, while past studies have examined the relationship at the person level, so this may play a role in the disparity as well.

The present study has a number of limitations worth mentioning. First, the data are not longitudinal, so the temporal ordering of variables (i.e., socioeconomic characteristics precede

marriage rates) cannot be established with certainty. Second, this study examines marriage rates on the aggregate county level, so it is difficult to examine the complex interplay between the financial situations of individual couples and their decision to marry, which would provide a rich extension of the current study. Third, the role of debt as a socioeconomic predictor of young adult marriage rates was not explored. Much has been written about the high levels of college debt that millennials face (Project on Student Debt 2008, 2011), and this indeed may play a role in young adult marriage rates. However, the American Community Survey does not have a student debt measure, so this limits the study's ability to fully explore all aspects of economic security. Fourth, this study focuses on the characteristics of young adults with regard to socioeconomic factors and marriage, but the role of parents is not examined in depth. For example, it is possible that the socioeconomic characteristics of parents may either help or exacerbate economic struggles of young adults, which may have an impact on their marriage rates. Likewise, the characteristics of non-millennial populations may play a role in millennial marriage rates, as older young adults (30+) may be more likely to consider partners outside of their generation, making the economic characteristics of other recent generations perhaps worthy of examination. In this way, future studies should consider exploring how older populations play a role in young adult marriage rates. Finally, although this study found an interaction effect between housing costs and wages, there may be other untested interaction effects between socioeconomic variables. Future studies should build upon the current study by examining more complex interaction effects among socioeconomic characteristics in order to better understand the multidimensional role of economic security on the marriage rates of young adults.

This study offers a more detailed analysis of the importance of economic security and marriage rates among young adults today. Disentangling the various socioeconomic predictors of

marriage offers a better understanding of what exactly constitutes the “economic security” prerequisite for marriage among millennials today. This study highlights how the historically low marriage rates of young adults today and the particularly concerning economic conditions they have faced are interrelated phenomena. Moreover, the socioeconomic characteristics of both men *and* women are important to young adult marriage rates. Looking forward, it is possible that marriage rates among young adults in the future may increase somewhat, as more recent high school and college graduates experience slightly more job opportunities and wages close to pre-recession levels (Kroeger and Gould 2017). In any case, this study suggests that understanding the state of marriage in the United States among young adults is partially dependent upon understanding the economic security and stability they experience, and the economic prerequisite for marriage remains both multidimensional and an important factor for the family choices of young adults.

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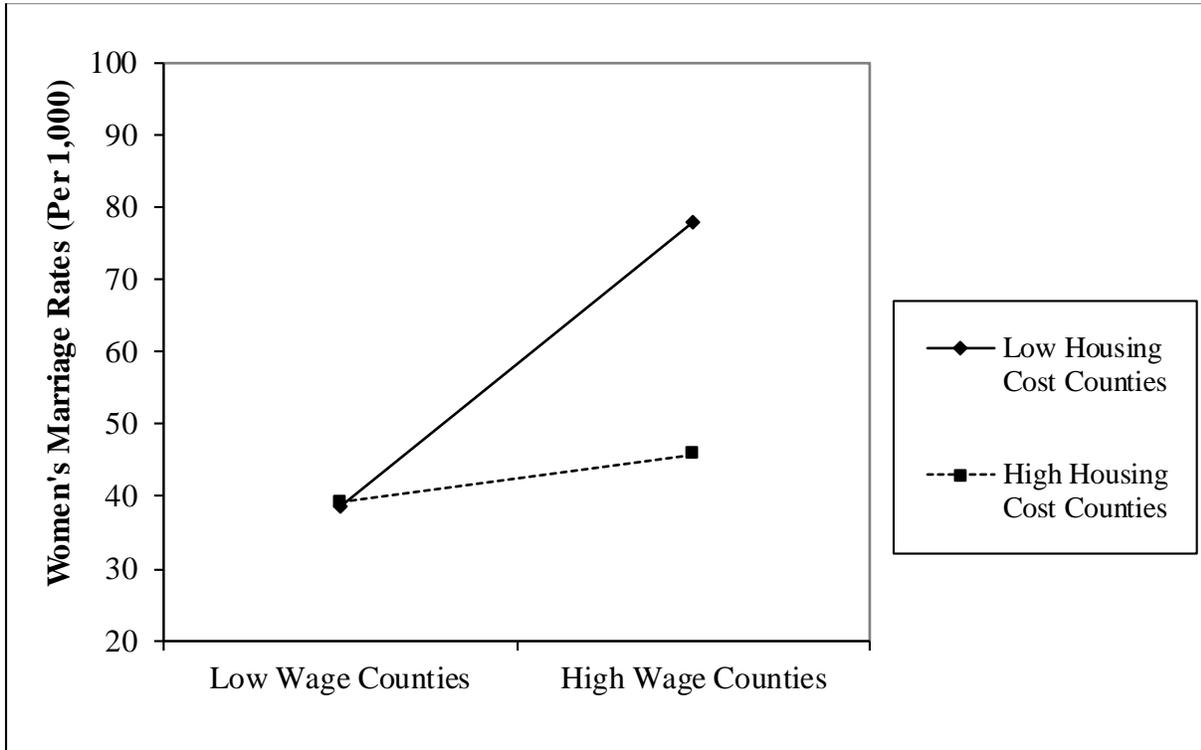
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Figure 1. Moderating Effect of Housing Costs on Relationship between Wages and Women's Marriage Rates for Young Adults Aged 18-34: 2012-2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates. Estimates Based on Table 6.

Note: "Low"= one standard deviation below the variable's mean; "High"= one standard deviation above the variable's mean.

Table 1. National Demographic Statistics of Young Adults Aged 18-34, County Level if Specified: 2012-2016

Variables	Mean (Median if specified)	Standard Error
<i>Controls</i>		
% full-time student	11.3	<0.1
% with Bachelor's degree	23.8	0.1
% black	14.2	<0.1
% Hispanic	20.6	<0.1
% foreign born	16.1	<0.1
Northeast ¹	17.4	<0.1
Midwest	20.7	<0.1
West	24.5	<0.1
% urban	85.4	<0.1
Young adult pop. < 1000 (county-level)	5.5	<0.1
<i>Labor Force Participation</i>		
% unemployed (men)	8.3	<0.1
% unemployed (women)	7.1	<0.1
% working full-time (men)	55.9	<0.1
% working full-time (women)	39.9	<0.1
Median hours worked	40.3	<0.1
<i>Wages</i>		
Median wages (all workers)	\$20,327	11.7
Median wages (full-time)	\$30,580	34.5
Median wages (male workers)	\$22,063	16.0
Median wages (female workers)	\$17,291	18.4
<i>Poverty</i>		
% in poverty (men only)	15.9	0.1
% in poverty (women only)	21.8	0.1
% in severe poverty (men only) ²	7.8	<0.1
% in severe poverty (women only) ²	11.5	<0.1
<i>Housing</i>		
Median housing costs	\$1,147	1.0
% own home	9.8	0.1
% living with parent	31.7	<0.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates.

¹ Reference category is South.

² Severe poverty = Income to poverty ratio is below 50% (e.g., \$10,000 income/\$20,000 poverty threshold). For more information on the American Community Survey, see www.census.gov/acs

Table 2. Marriage Rates of Young Adults Aged 18-34, County Level: 2012-2016

Variables	Mean (Median if specified)	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Bottom Quartile of Distribution	Top Quartile of Distribution
Men's marriage rates	39.0	0.4	71.0	≤ 26.8	≥ 47.9
Women's marriage rates	43.9	0.4	78.0	≤ 30.7	≥ 53.9

Variables	<i>Men's marriage rates</i>				<i>Women's marriage rates</i>			
	<u>Bottom quartile</u>		<u>Top quartile</u>		<u>Bottom quartile</u>		<u>Top quartile</u>	
	Mean	Standard Error	Mean	Standard Error	Mean	Standard Error	Mean	Standard Error
% unemployed (men)	9.2	0.2	8.5	0.2	9.5	0.2	8.5	0.2
% unemployed (women)	8.1	0.2	7.2	0.2	8.3	0.2	7.3	0.2
% working full-time (men)	53.9	0.5	61.7	0.4	54.8	0.5	60.6	0.4
% working full-time (women)	36.4	0.3	38.9	0.3	35.9	0.3	39.2	0.3
Median hours worked	39.6	0.1	39.9	<0.1	39.7	0.1	39.9	0.1
Median wages (all workers)	\$16,658	155.6	\$18,617	175.6	\$16,585	156.0	\$18,619	171.9
Median wages (full-time)	\$24,833	181.5	\$26,971	199.5	\$24,953	180.9	\$26,658	205.0
Median wages (male workers)	\$19,602	221.7	\$22,469	243.2	\$19,805	219.2	\$22,245	238.4
Median wages (female workers)	\$14,057	153.4	\$15,145	172.8	\$13,874	150.5	\$15,261	174.5
% in poverty (men only)	19.3	0.3	16.5	0.3	19.0	0.3	16.4	0.3
% in poverty (women only)	27.6	0.4	23.9	0.3	27.6	0.4	23.7	0.3
% in severe poverty (men only) ¹	8.6	0.2	7.2	0.2	8.5	0.2	7.2	0.2
% in severe poverty (women only) ¹	14.2	0.3	12.0	0.2	14.1	0.3	12.0	0.2
Median housing costs	\$800	9.2	\$851	10.1	\$811	9.4	\$835	9.9
% own home	11.9	0.2	14.2	0.2	11.8	0.2	14.0	0.2
% living with parent	33.4	0.4	29.4	0.3	33.6	0.4	29.8	0.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016 (5-year).

N=3,091 U.S. counties with at least 100 (weighted) men and women age 18-34.

¹ Severe poverty = Income to poverty ratio is below 50% (e.g., \$10,000 income/\$20,000 poverty threshold).

Note: The socioeconomic variables are averaged across counties within each quartile, which is why they may not line up with Table 1.

For more information on the American Community Survey, see www.census.gov/acs

Table 3. Labor Force Participation and Marriage Rates Among Young Adults Aged 18-34, Ordinary Least Squares Regression: 2012-2016

	Men's Marriage Rates					Women's Marriage Rates				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Control Variables</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>
% full-time student	-0.4 ***	-0.4 ***	0.0	-0.3 **	-0.3 ***	-0.6 ***	-0.6 ***	-0.4 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.6 ***
% with Bachelor's degree	0.2 **	0.2 *	0.0	0.1	0.2 **	0.1	0.1	0.1	-0.1	0.2 *
% black	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.2 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.2 ***	-0.2 ***	-0.2 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***
% Hispanic	-0.1 *	-0.1 *	-0.1 *	-0.1 **	-0.1 *	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1 +	-0.1
% foreign born	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Northeast	-9.0 ***	-9.1 ***	-7.0 ***	-8.4 ***	-9.2 ***	-7.8 ***	-8.0 ***	-7.2 ***	-6.8 ***	-8.3 ***
Midwest	-2.9 **	-2.8 **	-3.4 **	-2.9 **	-2.6 *	-1.2	-1.2	-1.2	-1.2	-0.9
West	-6.4 ***	-6.4 ***	-5.4 ***	-6.1 ***	-6.4 ***	-5.6 ***	-5.7 ***	-5.4 ***	-5.2 ***	-5.9 **
% urban	0.0 +	0.0 +	0.0 *	0.0 +	0.0 +	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Young adult pop. < 1000	-0.3	-0.2	-2.6 +	-0.4	-0.0	-3.1 +	-2.7	-3.8 *	-3.1 +	-2.6
<i>Variables of Interest</i>										
% unemployed (men)	-0.1					-0.4 ***				
% unemployed (women)		-0.1					-0.4 **			
% working full-time (men)			0.5 ***					0.2 ***		
% working full-time (women)				0.3 ***					0.5 ***	
Median hours worked					0.6 +					0.1
<i>R-Square</i>	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<i>F Value</i>	17.1 ***	17.0 ***	27.6 ***	18.7 ***	17.2 ***	17.8 ***	17.4 ***	18.5 ***	21.7 ***	16.6 ***

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates.

N=3,091 U.S. counties with at least 100 (weighted) men and women age 18-34.

b = unstandardized regression coefficient.

+ p<.10; * <.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Table 4. Wages and Marriage Rates Among Young Adults Aged 18-34, Ordinary Least Squares Regression: 2012-2016

	Men's Marriage Rates				Women's Marriage Rates			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<i>Control Variables</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>
% full-time student	-0.2 +	-0.3 ***	-0.2 *	-0.3 ***	-0.3 **	-0.5 ***	-0.4 ***	-0.4 ***
% with Bachelor's degree	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1 *	-0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
% black	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***
% Hispanic	-0.1 **	-0.1 *	-0.1 **	-0.1 *	-0.1 +	-0.1	-0.1 +	-0.1
% foreign born	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Northeast	-8.6 ***	-9.3 ***	-8.4 ***	-9.1 ***	-7.6 ***	-8.4 ***	-7.7 ***	-8.1 ***
Midwest	-2.7 *	-2.8 **	-2.8 **	-2.7 *	-0.8	-0.9	-0.9	-0.8
West	-6.0 ***	-6.4 ***	-6.0 ***	-6.4 ***	-5.3 ***	-5.8 ***	-5.5 ***	-5.6 ***
% urban	0.0 *	0.0	0.0 *	0.0 +	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Young adult population <1000	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.0	-1.9	-2.4	-2.4	-2.1
<i>Variables of Interest</i>								
Median wages (all workers)	0.6 ***				0.7 ***			
Median wages (full-time)		0.2 *				0.1		
Median wages (male workers)			0.5 ***				0.3 ***	
Median wages (female workers)				0.1				0.4 **
<i>R-Square</i>	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<i>F Value</i>	19.4 ***	17.4 ***	20.0 ***	17.1 ***	19.4 ***	16.6 ***	18.0 ***	17.5 ***

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates.

N=3,091 U.S. counties with at least 100 (weighted) men and women age 18-34.

b = unstandardized regression coefficient.

+ p<.10; * <.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Table 5. Poverty and Marriage Rates Among Young Adults Aged 18-34, Ordinary Least Squares Regression: 2012-2016

	Men's Marriage Rates								Women's Marriage Rates							
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Control Variables</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>
% full-time student	-0.4 ***	-0.4 ***	-0.4 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.6 ***	-0.5 ***	-0.6 ***	-0.5 ***	0.1 +	0.1	0.2 *	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
% with Bachelor's degree	0.2 **	0.2 *	0.2 **	0.2 *	0.1 +	0.1	0.2 *	0.1	-0.3 ***	-0.2 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***
% black	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.3 ***	-0.2 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***
% Hispanic	-0.1 *	-0.1 *	-0.1 *	-0.1 **	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
% foreign born	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Northeast	-9.2 ***	-9.3 ***	-9.2 ***	-9.3 ***	-8.3 ***	-8.6 ***	-8.2 ***	-8.5 ***	-0.9	-0.9	-0.9	-0.9	-0.9	-0.9	-0.9	-0.9
Midwest	-2.8 **	-2.8 **	-2.8 **	-2.8 **	-5.9 ***	-5.9 ***	-5.9 ***	-5.9 ***	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
West	-6.5 ***	-6.5 ***	-6.4 ***	-6.5 ***	-2.6	-2.4	-2.6	-2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% urban	0.0 +	0.0 +	0.0 +	0.0 +	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Young adult population <1000	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	0.0	-2.6	-2.4	-2.6	-2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Variables of Interest</i>																
% in poverty (men)	0.0				0.0				0.0							
% in poverty (women)		-0.1								-0.2 **						
% in severe poverty (men) ¹			0.0								0.0					
% in severe poverty (women) ¹				-0.1								-0.1 +				
<i>R-Square</i>	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<i>F Value</i>	17.0 ***	17.1 ***	17.0 ***	17.2 ***	16.6 ***	17.3 ***	16.6 ***	16.8 ***	16.6 ***	17.3 ***	16.6 ***	16.8 ***	16.6 ***	17.3 ***	16.6 ***	16.8 ***

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates.

N=3,091 U.S. counties with at least 100 (weighted) men and women age 18-34.

b = unstandardized regression coefficient.

¹ Severe poverty = Income to poverty ratio is below 50% (e.g., \$10,000 income/\$20,000 poverty threshold).

+ p<.10; * <.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Table 6. Housing and Marriage Rates Among Young Adults Aged 18-34, Ordinary Least Squares Regression: 2012-2016

	Men's Marriage Rates				Women's Marriage Rates			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<i>Control Variables</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>
% full-time student	-0.4 ***	-0.2 +	-0.2 *	-0.5 ***	-0.6 ***	-0.3 **	-0.4 ***	-0.7 ***
% with Bachelor's degree	0.3 ***	0.1 +	0.1 +	0.2 **	0.3 **	0.1	0.1	0.1 +
% black	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.2 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.3 ***	-0.2 ***	-0.2 ***
% Hispanic	-0.1 **	-0.1 **	-0.1 *	-0.1 +	-0.1 +	-0.1 *	-0.1	0.0
% foreign born	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2 +	0.14	0.1
Northeast	-8.3 ***	-7.5 ***	-7.7 ***	-7.5 ***	-7.2 ***	-6.3 **	-7.3 ***	-5.6 **
Midwest	-2.9 **	-3.0 **	-4.2 ***	-3.9 ***	-1.1	-1.3	-1.9	-2.8 *
West	-5.9 ***	-5.1 ***	-4.9 ***	-7.2 ***	-5.1 ***	-4.2 **	-4.8 **	-7.0 ***
% urban	0.0 +	0.0 *	0.0 **	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1 **
Young adult population <1000	-0.8	-0.5	-0.7	-1.7	-3.4 +	-3.2 +	-2.9 +	-5.1 **
Median wages (for interaction only)		1.0 ***				1.3 ***		
<i>Variables of Interest</i>								
Median housing costs	-0.0 *	0.0			-0.0 *	0.0		
Median housing costs * wages		0.0				-0.0 *		
% own home			0.7 ***				0.4 ***	
% living with parent				-0.3 ***				-0.5 ***
<i>R-Square</i>	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<i>F Value</i>	17.4 ***	17.3 ***	20.6 ***	21.0 ***	17.2 ***	17.9 ***	17.8 ***	25.9 ***

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates.

N=3,091 U.S. counties with at least 100 (weighted) men and women age 18-34.

b = unstandardized regression coefficient.

Note: Estimates of -0.0 are rounded significant estimates that fall between 0 and -0.1.

+ *p*<.10; * <.05; ** *p*<.01; *** *p*<.001